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Review

The Brazilian consumer's profile and perceptions of organic foods: a review

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The aim of this study was to know the consumer's perception of organic food in Brazil, including their socioeconomic profile, their behavior, their knowledge regarding organic food; and also to show the main historical facts related to the production and marketing of organic products; as well as aspects of food and their consumption in Brazil. A literature review was carried out using works about this subject. In general, most of consumers were female, aged more than 30 years old and graduated. The main motivation in buying organic products was the healthy issue. Most consumers say they know the concept of organic food. They relate it to being free of agrochemicals. This shows a limited knowledge, not considering other aspects, and in some cases, there is a confusion regarding the concept of the natural food, showing that there is not a clear perception of what an organic food is.

Keywords: organic food, consumer behavior, food safety, consumer's profile, marketing.

INTRODUCTION

The organic movement began as an alternative model to industrial agriculture. The organic agriculture has been practiced since the 1920's (Torjusen, 2001). According to FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius guidelines (1999), an organic agriculture is "a holistic production management [in which] the primary goals are to optimize the health and productivity of interdependent communities of soil, life, plants animals and people". Thus, an organic food is a result of this system of production. Currently, it is present in more than 160 countries, and occupies about 43 million hectares of agricultural land are managed organically (FiBL & IFOAM, 2015).

The global sales of organic food and drink reached almost US$ 64 billion in 2012 (Organic Monitor, 2013)and US$ 84 billion in 2014 (Marketline, 2015).It is a significant world market with high growth rate,170% in the last 10 years(Organic Monitor, 2013).

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In Brazil, it has shown a higher demand, with an average of 25% over the past 5 years (2010 – 2014). In 2010, there was an increase in sales of 40% compared to 2009, involving R$ 350 million (US$ 100 million) (Organics Brazil, 2013). According to the Organics Net (2015), the organic product sector has mad, nearly R$ 2billion(about US$ 570 million) in 2014.Most Brazilian consumers (68% of respondents) are willing to pay more for a product that does not pollute the environment, according to a survey of Portraits of the Brazilian Society - Environment, which deals with environmental issues, conducted by IBOPE (2010).The best selling organic products are fresh food, such as fruits and vegetables. The large retail chains, such as supermarkets/ hypermarkets, continue holding the highest sales of food and beverage in Brazil, representing nearly 80% of the market (IPD, 2011).

The growth in organic food sales is influenced both by the growing consumer demand for organic food and by the greater accessibility in retail outlets (Dettmann, 2008).

According to Bezawada and Pauwels (2013), motivations for buying organics include health reasons, environmental concerns, nutritional value and taste, as well as considerations regarding ethics and animal welfare.

An organic product is perceived by consumers, mainly as a healthy and safe food when compared to products originating from “industrialized agriculture” (Hoefkens et al., 2009). The consumer’s awareness means understanding their decision-making behavior, which involves the process on which people determine what, when, how, and above all, where and from whom to buy (Berman and Evans, 1992).

The organic consumer’s profile is differentiated according to where the consumers live (town or rural area), and also the place of purchase(fair or supermarket).

The economic aspect may direct and change consumer behavior at the time of purchase. The most economically privileged classes tend to eat more natural and healthier products, for they are generally more expensive (Lima-Filho et al., 2004).

Knowing the organic food consumer’s profile and the factors that motivate them to buy this kind of product is crucial to promote market expansion in order to adapt it to the consumer’s needs and expectations concerning the products and the services(Andrade and Bertoldi, 2012);which allows direct production work and leads the marketing process of these products (Doriquetto et al., 2009).This study aims to know the consumer’s profile and their perception of organic food in Brazil, including their socioeconomic profile, their behavior, their knowledge regarding organic food, and also the main motivation towards the consumption of these products; as well as discuss the main aspects of food and their consumption in the country.

METHODS

To develop this study, a narrative literature review was carried out with the main papers published in journals and conferences in the last 10 years about the profile of the consumer of organic food in Brazil and their perception of its concept as well as the main studies related to organic food.

Narrative literature review provide readers with up-to-date knowledge about a specific topic or theme (Rother, 2007). These review normally use a qualitative approach. A Qualitative research allows the collection of opinions and perspectives of individuals, which is more difficult to be obtained if a quantitative research is made. The advantage of this type of research for the study of organizations is the richness of details obtained (Bryman, 1989).

Food consumption and culture in Brazil

People and different social groups express their identity also through food (Phillips, 2003). The choice of food, its preparation and consumption are related to cultural identity- factors developed over time, which help distinguish one social group from another, being closely related to history, the environment and specific requirements imposed to the social group on a daily basis(CNSAN – Conferência Nacional de Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional, 2004).

Brazil is a multicultural country made up of different cultures - several indigenous groups, by the Portuguese colonists and by black slaves from Africa - in addition to the influence of European and Asian immigrants who came to live in the country. The immigration of these people to Brazil began in the early twentieth century and continues to this day. These immigrants influenced the local culture in many ways. In food, it was no different. Currently, one can savor in Brazil the cuisine of various regions of the world (Carvalho, 2015).

According to CNSAN - National Conference on Food Security and Nutrition (2004), besides the already mentioned influences (Portuguese colonization, European immigrants and Asian, Indian and African culture), the characterization of the Brazilian food culture must consider three other aspects:

• Continental dimension of the country, not only in their physical aspects, but in the very diversity of historical conditions of appropriation and colonization of its territory. Therefore, Brazil has a unique food culture, but many food crops in each of its regions;

• Strong presence of Italian families, German, Spanish, Polish, Japanese, Arabic among others: alongside the influence of Portuguese, blacks and Indians, there is the strong presence of families of these countries, who settled in specific regions of the country, introducing its eating habits. According to Carvalho (2015), Italian immigrants were responsible for bringing pizza and soup; the Germans brought beer, salted and smoked meats, potatoes, spicy sausages and hotdog sausage; the Japanese influenced Brazilians to eat vegetables, salads and fish (also indigenous cultural heritage).

• Environmental factors and their influence on living conditions: climate, soil type, geographic layout, fauna and flora of each region, and the very ability to access different social groups to food.

Over the past 60 years, food has gone through a process of great change almost all around the world, with a growing trend towards standardization of eating habits. In Brazil, this process also occurred and with marked intensity, experiencing to a large extent, the same causes which prevailed in most other countries. With the Brazilian urbanization, convenience is increasingly appreciated, to reduce the time for food preparation, and their consumption. The expansion of the communication facilities and expansion of the transport system shortened the distances between the different markets. Consumers saw growing opportunities to know food from distant regions, broadening their options of choice, speeding up the exchange of eating habits among different regions of the country as well as the contact and even the adoption of food crops from elsewhere in the World (CNSAN - National Conference on Food and Nutrition Security, 2004).

Despite the economic and socio-cultural contrasts between developed and developing countries, the trends observed through epidemiological studies on food consumption indicate the reproduction of similar characteristics, i.e. the dietary pattern before characteristic of developed countries is currently a concern also of countries developing (Garcia, 2003).

In Brazil, in the 80s and 90s, according to the Consumer Expenditure Survey (POF), released by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) (Ministério da Saúde, 2014), and research Rodrigues et al., (2007) and Polimeno (2004) showed that nutritional standards have varied because of economic, social, demographic and health-related changes. A decrease in consumption of typical foods from each region (fruits and vegetables) was noticed, increased consumption of foods with high amounts of simple sugar, fat and salt. Rodrigues et al., (2007) highlight some sociocultural changes over the years in Brazil: loss of cultural identity and increased spending on food away from home, because of urbanization, the increased purchasing power and the distance between home and work.

This scenario raises a new Food Security and Nutrition schedule, which began in the twentieth century: the need to improve the Brazilian food quality, through the provision of healthier foods (Campos and Lessa, 2014). The act of eating, although considered necessity of the first order, it is also impacted by social, cultural and economic factors.

The current reality in stabilized markets is a consumer, increasingly demanding, not limiting to the organoleptic properties of food, but also paying attention to cholesterol levels, fat, calories, sugar, sodium, plus the added values such as packaging, vitamins doped and even the way they were produced before carrying out their options. The trend of food associated with health already constitutes significant rising branch, so much that multinational food companies have already adopted measures in their strategic planning in order to keep up with these changes (Dresch and Andrade, 2010).

In Brazil, in a recent survey carried out by Protest - Consumer Association (2015) with 760 Brazilian consumers, with the aim of evaluating the eating habits of that public in recent years, there was increased consumption of vegetables and reducing the intake of meat, as well as a greater willingness of people to pay more for organic and socially sustainable food. Among the survey participants, 48% said they ate less animal protein during the last year and, of that group, 89% and replaced it by vegetable protein, such as soy 37% bought less red meat. More than half of respondents (51%) said reduced buying sweets and desserts, 32% consumed less sweetened beverages, for example soft drinks. On the other hand, more fruits were placed in the cart (38%), over vegetables (32%) and more fishes (33%). Most respondents (94%) would be willing to consume more organic products if the offer were larger and 40% said they would pay up to 5% more for organic foods that would ensure animal welfare. According to this study women are more flexible on eating healthy foods, and as they are responsible for supplying the pantry of the house 62% of Brazilian respondents. Asked about their concerns about food safety, respondents highlighted, among the aspects that worried them: excess pesticides in agriculture and hormones in meat. The study results reveal a new look by the Brazilians.

Historical facts of organic foods in Brazil

In order to understand the evolution of the Brazilian organic food market better, a Board (1) with the main historical facts related to the production and marketing of organic products in Brazil was developed.

In the 1960s was established the first Association of Studies, Guidance and Rural Assistance and in the 1970s were established the first foundations and cooperatives of organic producers in Brazil. The International Federation of the Organic Agriculture Movement (IFOAM), published in the 1980s, the first Basic Standard for Organic Production and Processing. The first certification bodies were established in the country in the 1980s, such as Biodynamic Institute (IBD) and Biological Farmers Association of the State of Rio de Janeiro (ABIO). The first Federal law 10,831 to regulate the organic sector came in 2003. In 2011, the use of the official public seal of the

Board 1 – Some important historical facts in the trade of organic foods in Brazil and in world

Decades of the 20th century and start of 21th century	
60	• First Association of Studies, Guidance and Rural Assistance - (Assesoar) focused on familiar organic production, created in 1966 and based in Francisco Beltrão, State of Paraná, Brazil.
70	• International Federation of the Organic Agriculture Movement (IFOAM)is a worldwide umbrella non-governmental organization for the organic agriculture movement. It was *founded* in France, 1972. • First foundations and cooperatives of organic producers in Brazil. Mokiti Okada Foundation (1971), in the State of São Paulo and Coolméia Cooperative (1978) in Porto Alegre, State of Rio Grande do Sul.
80	• IFOAM published, in 1980, the first Basic Standard for Organic Production and Processing, as a guiding tool for all its member organizations. • Establishment of the first certification bodies in the country, such as the Biodynamic Institute in Botucatu, State of São Paulo (1982) and the Biological Farmers Association of the State of Rio de Janeiro (ABIO) established in 1985. • Initiation of the formal organic market in Brazil. • Brazil initiated its organic exports to Europe, in 1988-89.
90	• In 1999, Ricardo Cerveira and Manuel Cabral de Castro published one of the first studies of the consumer`s profile of organic products. Workdoneatthe fair in São Paulo city, in the State of São Paulo. In the same year, Jeane M. Rucinskipublished a workaboutconsumersoforganicfood in Curitiba, Stateof Paraná. • First official standard (Normative Instruction 007/99, of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply) with the purpose of regulating the organic sector.
XXI Century 2000	• The organic system of production was regulated by Federal Law 10,831 of December 23, 2003. • Large retail chains such as supermarkets/hypermarkets hold most of the sales of organic food and beverages in Brazil. The Pão de Açúcar group has 120 organic items.
XXI Century 2010	• In January 2011, took effect the official public seal of the Brazilian System of Organic Conformity Assessment used to identify organic products. • There is variety of organic food offered in large retail chains, such as Pão de Açúcar and Carrefour, which offer the consumer more than 200 different organic products

Source: authors from Alves et al. (2012), Brasil (1999), Brasil (2003), BeulkeandMattuella (2007), Campanhola and Valarini (2001), Cerveira and Castro (1999); Ehlers (1994); Ehlers (1999); IFOAM (2015); MAPA (2015), Organics Net (2015), Rucinski (1999).

Brazilian System of Organic Conformity Assessment became necessary to identify organic products. In January 2011, the public official seal of the Brazilian System of Organic Conformity Assessment was used to identify organic products. Currently, there is a great variety of organic food offered to the consumer in large retail chains.

The organic market in Brazil began to take shape in recent decades unlike United States, Japan and European countries such as Germany, France, United Kingdom, Italy and Denmark with mature markets.

Organic market profile in Brazil

In Brazil, from 2007 to 2012, the production of organic food went from 40.000 tons to 300.000 tons. The country has 0,7 million hectaresof agricultural land organically (less than 0,3% of agricultural land) (FiBL & IFOAM, 2015). The following states concentrate more than 70% of the Brazilian production of organic food: Paraná (PR), São Paulo (SP), Rio Grande do Sul (RS), Minas Gerais (MG), Espírito Santo (ES) and Mato Grosso do Sul (MS) (Sebrae, 2014).

It is considered by the main importers of organic foods– United States of America, European Union and Japan - as the country with the greatest potential of organic production for export: about 60% of the Brazilian organic production goes abroad. Another 30% of organics are sold in the Brazilian market and the rest goes to own consumption (Clementin, 2014).

Board 2. Studies with the characterization of Brazilian consumer`s profile of organic food

Place and people interviewed	Characteristics of consumer profile
Florianópolis, SC - 200 interviewed in two super markets (Kohlrausch et al., 2004)	- Gender: female (76.0%) - Age: age groupfrom 36-50 yearsold (42.5%) - Education: graduate (55.0%) - Income: 3-5 minimum wages (26.5%), 6-8 minimum wages (24.0%) and 9-11 minimum wages 22.0%.
Recife, PE - 113 interviewed in four organic fairs (Vanconcelos et al., 2005)	- Gender: female (66.4%) - Age: most (80%) more than 31 yearsold, and 27% were between 51 and 60 years old. - Education: 80% graduate and only 15% in High School - Income: 6 to 15 minimum wages (34%), and 48% earn more than 16 minimum wages.
- Ribeirão Preto, SP - 57 interviewed in supermarkets (Rodrigues et al., 2009)	- Gender: not informed - Education: not informed - Income: not informed
Campo Grande, MS - 154 interviewed in supermarkets (Momesso et al., 2009)	- Gender: women only - Age: 36 to 50 yearsold (40.9%), and 28% were between 21 and 35 yearsold - Education: Most (55.2%) have complete highereducation - Income: 50% of the interviewed earned 12 or more minimum wages
Vila Velha, and Vitoria. Both in State of the Espírito do Santo. - 54 interviewed in free markets (Doriquetto et al., 2009)	- Gender: 56% were female and 44% male - Age: between 19 and 80 yearsold (averageof 51 yearsold) - Education: most college graduates (69%) - Income: above 10 minimum wages monthly
- Porto Alegre, RS - 86 interviewed in fair of agroecological farmers (Neutzling et al., 2010)	- Gender: female (62.8%) - Age: between 22-35 yearsold (44.2%) and 36-55 yearsold (32.6%) - Education: 59.3% are graduated and 34.9% have high school degree - Income: between 4-6 minimum wages (33.7%) and over 7 times the minimum wage (42%)
Sevencapitals (São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba, Brasília, Belo Horizonte, Goiânia and Belém) - 1,907 interviewed in several points ofsale. (Organic Services and Vital Food, 2010)	- Gender: 69% women. - Age: 39% between 46-60 yearsold and 29% 31-45 years old. - Education: 40% haveatleast a college degree - Income: 44% earn over R$ 6,000, 21% between R$6,000 and R$ 10,000 and 23% more than R$ 10,000.
- Goiânia, GO - 309 interviewed in supermarkets, fairs and specialized stores in organicproducts.(Barbosa et al., 2011) - 31% of respondents reported they not consume organic food	- Gender: female (58.3%) - Age: between 31-50 years old (39.81%) - Education: complete high school (29.8%) and college graduated (36.9%) - Income: between 0-4 minimum wages (63%)
- Belo Horizonte, MG. - 400 people interviewed in supermarkets and fairs (Andrade and Bertoldi, 2012)	- Gender: female (76.0%) - Age: age above 30 yearsold (90.3%) - Education: graduated (81.5%) - Income: family income above 12 minimum wages per month (78.7%).

Board 2. Continue

Campo Grande, MS - 400 interviewed in the urban area (Lima-Filho et al., 2012).	- Gender: female (70.8%) - Age: between 50 and 59 years old (25%), with 60 years old or more (21.3%) and between 30 and 39 yearsold (20.3%) - Education: high school degrees (32.0%) and graduated representing 30.5% - Income: economy class C (55.0%), economy class B (25.5%)
Florianópolis, SC; and Jundiaí, SP - 110 interviewed in the urban area (supermarkets) (Turra et al., 2013)	- Gender: female (73% in Florianópolis and 75% in Jundiaí) - Age: 26 - 45 anos (64% in Florianópolis and 59% in Jundiaí) - Education: graduated (64% in Florianópolis and 71% in Jundiaí) - Income: Florianópolis: 3 – 6 minimum wages (50%), 7 – 12% minimum wages (27%) Jundiaí: 3 – 6 minimum wages (51%), 7 – 12 minimum wages (31%)

1 minimum wages = R$788,00 = US$254.00 (March, 2015)

*Class*A: upto R$9,745.00 (US$3,200); *Class*B: from R$7,475.00 (US$2,450) to R$9,745.00; *Class C*: from R$1,734.00 (US$570) to R$7,475.00 (US$2,450); *Class*D: from R$1,085.00 (US$356) to R$1,734.00 (US$570) - (FGV, 2014).

Brazil has the largest organic products market in Latin America(FiBL & IFOAM, 2015).The country is a global source of sustainable coffee, soya beans, sugar, juices and herbs (Organic Monitor, 2014).The list of most exported Brazilian organic products differs somewhat from the main produced: coffee (MG and PR), cocoa (MG), soybeans (PR and RS), sugar (SP and PR), yerba mate (PR) orange juice (SP and RS), brown sugar (SP), dried fruit (SP), cashew nuts (Northeast), palm oil (Northeast), tropical fruits (Northeast), palm oil (PA), palm (PA) guarana (AM), rice (RS), citrus fruits (PR and SP) and livestock (MS) (Sebrae, 2014; Organics Net, 2015).

The supermarket network is the main organic sales channel in Brazil, accounting for 77% of sales of products in the country. In addition to this sales channel, others such as specialty stores, public markets, fairs and foodservice (food market outside the home) are of great importance, despite having smaller slices on responsibility for sales of organic products (Sebrae, 2014).

Organic Consumer Profile in Brazil

In the last decade, there was a significant increase on the demand for organic food in Brazil (US$80 million in 2004 to about US$ 780 million in 2014). Thus, there was also an increase of studies relating the consumer’s profile and how the consumer understands this type of food. A Board 2 was made to better understand the characteristics of consumer.

The studies showed that most of the organic food buyers are women, graduated with variable age, but commonly above 30 years old. The predominant income was from 3 to 12 minimum wages. In some regions, a part of these consumers has income bigger than 16 minimum wages. However, it is important to consider the different periods, places and some limitations of these studies; as for example, the number of interviewed people was significant. Another point to consider is that there may be a participant's tendency to agree with the position of the researcher during the interview (Torjusen et al., 2004).

According to Market Analysis survey (2010), about 17% of the Brazilian population buys organic food once to five times per week. Another work about Conscious Consumption in Brazil and Perception of Brazilian`s Corporate Social Responsibility considers that 24% of the Brazilian population bought some organic food in the last six months (data 2012) (Instituto Akatu, 2013).

Motivation to buy organic foods

In the individual level, food consumption is central since any given human individual is constructed biologically, psychologically and socially by the food he or she chooses to incorporate (Fischler, 1988). The main motivation to buy organic foods in Brazil is discussed in the following.

Organic food is healthier when compared to conventional food according to 91.2% of the interviewed people in Recife (Vasconcelos et al., 2005). Similar results were obtained by Lima-Filho et al.,(2012) and Neutzling et al.,(2010)where health was the most important issue related to the consumption of these products. According to Cuenca et al.,(2007), the main motivation for consuming organic food was the best quality for 86.4% of consumers, followed by food safetyfor22.7% of the interviewed. In Goiânia, the main factors that motivated the consumer of organic food were being healthier when compared to conventional food (61%) and not containing pesticides (21%) (Barbosa et al., 2011). In Belo Horizonte, the concern with health (37.8%), the highest nutrient content (27.8%) and more distinct taste (21%) were the top three motivations for consuming of organic fruits and vegetables (Andrade and Bertoldi, 2012).According to Doriquetto et al.,(2009)the main motivational aspects were the sensory characteristics (66.7%) and the promotion of health/well-being (52.4%) to Vila Velha and Vitoria, both in State of Espírito Santo.

An important factor related in the process of choosing is the level education. According to Lima-Filho et al.,(2012) it can be seen that higher the level of education, higher the level of perception that organics are good for health.

For European consumers, the most important reason for buying organic food is the belief that it is healthier (Willer and Kilcher, 2012). There is apparently little difference among European countries in motivation for organic food consumption (Thøgersen, 2010). European Consumers in express concern about the application of nanotechnologies in and around food items, primarily because of possible health risks (Reisch et al., 2011).

Perception of Organic Food

In a study about consumer behavior of organic products in Florianopolis, SC (Kohlrausch et al., 2004),most respondents (94.5%) said they knew the meaning of an organic product. However, when describing this meaning, most people involved in the research were limited to respond that anorganic product is a product without pesticides. This information is generally available in displays, signs in supermarkets and in the media.

In Recife, in the State of Pernambuco, the definition of organic products for the majority of consumers (76%) is that they are “products grown without chemical additives, such as pesticides", and 17.7% provided incomplete responses, such as “they are products that are good for health" (Vasconcelos et al., 2005).

In Vila Velha and Vitória, in the State of Espírito Santo, a survey conducted by Doriquetto et al., (2009) to determine the profile of consumers and the social representation of organic food questioned respondents "what is organic food for you?". The most frequent response was that they related organic food as being pesticide-free (61.9%), 28.6% related it to a natural product and 26.2% as one that does not harm the environment.

Momesso et al.,(2009) interviewed 154 consumers of organic food in Campo Grande, in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, to know the marketing potential of these products. Concerning the concept of organic food, the majority (54.4%) said "an organic product is a product without pesticides or is chemical-free". From the remaining, 16% did not know how to answer the question, and some even replied that they were "products grown in water," while 29.6% did not answer, which means that they did not know the meaning of it. Another important fact is that approximately 52% of them would pay more for that product and would be willing to look for this product in local market (63.3%). After the clarification of the benefits of organic products, almost all (99.4%) would opt for these products. This shows that information is a differential issue in the purchase of organic food.

In Ribeirão Preto, in the State of São Paulo, concerning the concept of “organic”, 86% of the respondents, out of 57 respondents (Rodrigues et al., 2009), reported that it was as a type of food without the use of pesticides and they also reported different responses for its designation.

In Goiânia, in the State of Goiás,32% of the respondents reported knowing that the food is organic by label / seal, 31% by the origin of the product i.e., they believe know the origin of the goods and 20% for the credibility of the seller (Barbosa et al., 2011).From the 400 people interviewed in Belo Horizonte, in the State of Minas Gerais, 69.7% defined organic food as “a food free of pesticide residues” (Andrade and Bertoldi, 2012).

According to Turra et al., (2013) the concept of organic food for the majority of the respondents (82% in Florianópolis and 74% in Jundiaí) is that they are "food grown without the use of pesticides".

In a review about consumers’ perceptions of organic food in Australia and other countries, a large proportion of consumers have been identified as having an understanding of organic food as being grown without chemicals, but the level of knowledge has been varied (Phuong, 2013).In a research about perceptions and misperceptions of the terms local and organic, specifically focusing on differences between United States and Canadian consumers, there was a subset of consumers correctly identifies the main characteristics of organic. However, many consumers have inaccurate perceptions of organic terminology in these countries(Campbell et al., 2014).

In other countries, the results showed a greater awareness of the organic concept. However, for most consumers the organic perception is similar in Brazil. These studies showed that the concept of organic food to the consumer is related with a product of better quality.

According to Kühl (sd), the quality is related either to the reliability of specific properties of the products, or to the confidence with which consumers can buy certain products if they are looking for specific properties. In the objective viewpoint, the quality of the product refers either to the intrinsic characteristics of the product, or to the hidden, or nutritional characteristics, or even to absence of pesticides and no environmental damage, which are not clearly noticed by consumers. In a subjective point of view, the quality of the product refers to the sensory characteristics of consumer preferences such as price, appearance, color, shape, taste and brand image. Both characteristics influence the decision of buying to buy the product or not. However, according to Pereira (2001), consumers use extrinsic indicators to search for intrinsic values.

The certification certifies that a food is “organic” according to the organic system, but does not explain the consumer how the food is produced, i.e., the certification is a tool that reduces the informational asymmetry; however, some attributes about the quality of organic food that could best identify this product remain unidentifiable to the consumer (Turra et al., 2014). Although consumers may know that the product is organic when they are informed (Giannakas, 2002).

CONCLUSIONS

Regardless the place of purchase, most buyers of organic food are women (56% to 76%). In general, they are more than 30 years old, graduated and they have an income of more than 3minimum wages.

The main motivation of buying organic products was because they were healthy. The main limitations to buy organic products were the price and the offer of seasonality. There is a potential for consumption increase of organic food in the main cities surveyed.

There have been many studies carried out with respect to consumers" perceptions of organic food”. The concept of organic food for the majority of the studies is that they are "food grown without the use of pesticides." This shows that the consumer of organic food does not have a clear concept of what they consumes, because of the lack of knowledge and of the failure in recognizing the quality of the product attributes, which are not easily visible and identifiable and can be confused with other types of food. This can lead to purchasing a product which is not desired. Specific actions of advertising and marketing can help further promote organic product markets further.

There is a lack of studies in Brazil that show if the consumer can recognize and find an organic product in key points of sale, as in supermarkets.

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